

LIVING
THE WORD

CARIBBEAN BIBLE LESSONS



Leaders

Adults • Ages 19 and Up • Learner Guide

January • February • March • April • 2024



Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living
hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the dead. – 1 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

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The learning activities suggested in this book are used as part of the teaching plan provided in the *Adult Teacher Guide*. It is strongly recommended that each church provides a copy of the *Adult Learner Guide* for each adult and adult teacher.

Unit 1: Blueprint for Forgiveness

January 7	No Forgiveness—No Fellowship	5
January 14	Forgive Yourself	8
January 21	Engage in Selfless Fellowship	11
January 28	Choose to Forgive — Choose Harmony	14

Unit 2: Matters of the Mind

February 4	Nurture Mental Health	20
February 11	Resist Pornography	23
February 18	Engage in Lifelong Learning	26
February 25	Have Healthy Self-esteem	29

Unit 3: Living Genuine Faith

March 3	Genuine Religion	33
March 10	Genuine Faith	36
March 17	Genuine Wisdom	39
March 24	Genuine Patience	42

Unit 4: The Jesus Impact

March 31	Where is Jesus?	47
April 7	What if I Reject Jesus?	50
April 14	What About Hell?	53
April 21	What About the Future?	56
April 28	How Do We Remember Jesus?	59

F
E
A
T
U
R
E
S

Editor's Corner	2	Bible Background on	
Meet Our Writers	3	the Epistle of James	32
Gratitude in a Nutshell	4	Life Lessons from Nature	45
Self-Assessment for 2024	17	Mission Point	62
Jesus Changed My Journey	18	How to Become a Christian	64

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Dear Brothers and Sisters,



A blessed and happy New Year to You All. Your continued engagement for 2024 with the **Caribbean Bible Lessons Bible Leaders Learner Guide** indicates your strong desire for learning God's Word. We are grateful to God for having taken us through the challenges of the past year. We reflect with remorse on those instances when we wavered in our commitment to the mission of making Christ known. At times, we sought to rely on our own strength, thereby falling short of what our Lord expected of us. With humility, we seek forgiveness and pledge, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, our renewed engagement to His calling.

We view with concern the turmoil existing in our local and regional communities, as well as global occurrences such as wars, overthrow of governments and other destabilising actions which contribute to feelings of general unease and anxiety. The question that comes to mind readily, is, "when will all of these things be replaced by God's rule on earth?"

As Christians, there is one thing about which we are assured. Our God promises His continued presence, protection and peace. So irrespective of all the things that challenge our faith, God is still in control, and He will act in due time. All that is required is for us to trust Him fully because He is always working on our behalf.

We at Caribbean Christian Publications pray that you will be strengthened as you continue to live a life pleasing to God.

We look forward with anticipation, as you seek to bring new levels of enthusiasm in engaging with the materials over the next four months. Seek opportunities to discuss the lessons outside of the Sunday school as through sharing, new insights can be gained and the concepts will be reinforced.

This edition of **CBL Bible Leaders Learner Guide** covers **January to April 2024**. It bids us start the New Year with a clean heart, mind and spirit. **Unit 1** emphasises each person's need to seek God's forgiveness, forgive others and engage in self-forgiveness. The **Unit** is titled, **Blueprint for Forgiveness**.

Unit 2, Matters of the Mind, examines biblical principles and practices as well as contemporary examples of exercising good, Christian stewardship of the mind. A call to engage in **Living Genuine Faith** is the focus of **Unit 3**, which is a study of the Epistle of James.

Unit 4 explores Jesus' resurrection and some of His parables to guide us in understanding what impact faith in Jesus has on one's past, present and future life. The **Unit** is dubbed, **The Jesus Impact**.

Be diligent in your efforts, as you seek to learn God's will and purpose for your life. Abundant blessings for 2024.

Joan M. Mars

MEET OUR WRITERS

UNIT ONE: Cheryl Strachan, The Bahamas

Dr. Strachan is actively involved with various ministries of the church in The Bahamas, including the Sunday School and music ministries. This has been her chosen path, since giving her life to Christ during her youth. Dr. Strachan has post-graduate level expertise in Christian leadership. This poet and playwright has surrendered her talents to God to be used in His service. Over the years, some of Sister Strachan's poems have been published as part of the Caribbean Bible Lessons for adults.



UNIT TWO: Joan Purcell, Grenada



Mrs Purcell finds joy in imparting God's Word through the mentoring of women, conducting leadership and discipleship training and writing Christian literature. An author of several books, Sister Purcell finds it quite a humbling experience to be used by God to touch the lives of families through the writing of Christian literature. This former Member of Parliament who has served both government and opposition in her country is now fully focused on growing every day, in knowing God, others and herself; as she teaches God's Word.

UNIT THREE: Genevieve McMaster, British Virgin Islands

Ms McMaster has a zeal for teaching others about God's Word and His purpose for their life. That fervour has seen her serving in various ministries of her church on the island of Tortola. She is a teacher of adult Sunday School and an educator by profession. Sister McMaster explains that writing adult Sunday School Lessons has challenged her to be more committed to prayer, studying the Bible and listening keenly to the Holy Spirit. She is devoted to allowing the Lord to guide her in helping to improve the welfare of adults.



UNIT FOUR: Yolanda Brathwaite, Barbados



Mrs Brathwaite has a burning desire to assist at-risk young people and women to find their place in the kingdom of God. She is actively involved in the ladies' ministry at her church and across the island of Barbados. An educator who works with children with behavioural challenges, Sister Brathwaite is focused on helping youth, young adults and women of all ages realise that God uniquely prepares them for service through the use of their spiritual gifts. Having faced several life-changing crises in her life,

Mrs Brathwaite is convinced that God restored her and she understands the need to be honest and available to others, and obedient to God's call.

Gratitude in a Nutshell

At the beginning of the New Year, it is customary for human beings to give thanks. Almost by rote, expressions are directed to God for "sparing life to see another year". As Christians, we are exhorted to "Give thanks for everything." (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18.) God, our Creator, is the source of all good things and we ought rightly to acknowledge His goodness towards us. What is the importance of gratitude? Are there benefits to be derived from cultivating an attitude of gratitude? How would you rate your Gratitude Index? .

Gratitude is defined as "the state of being grateful; thankfulness. (Dictionary.net <https://www.dictionary.net>) Gratitude can also be described as an attitude of valuing life as a gift, as well as a moral affect that arises from and inspires behaviour motivated by a care for the well being of others. (McCullough et al., 2001). The American Psychological Association defines gratitude as a sense of happiness and thankfulness in response to a fortunate happenstance or tangible gift. Gratitude is therefore demonstrated in certain behaviours in response to experiences that are seen as; "useful, meaningful or beneficial"

Types of Gratitude

Some psychologists identify three categories of gratitude:

1. **An "affective trait"**, that is, an overall tendency to have a grateful disposition
2. **A mood** , which may see daily fluctuations in overall gratitude,
3. **An emotion**, a temporary feeling of gratitude which may be experienced after receiving a gift or a favour from someone.

How would you describe your state of gratitude?

Some Ways to Cultivate Gratitude

- Be intentional; take notice of all the positive things in your life.
- Be aware of any preoccupation with negativity and complaining.
- Keep a gratitude journal. Each day write down for what you are grateful. This will help you identify and reflect on people, things, or events for which you are thankful.
- Practise humility. Recognise that sources of goodness lie outside the self. One can be grateful to our Creator, other people, animals, and the world, but not to oneself.
- Be ready to show appreciation for and to return kindness to others.
- See the silver lining in every situation. Remember our God always works on our behalf, even in situations which seem gloomy
- Write your prayers of thanksgiving. In so doing, you are better able to focus.

As you look forward to **2024**, for what experiences in the past year are you thankful? How will you demonstrate your gratitude in 2024? Ensure that your expressions of gratitude reflect your faith in God.

No Forgiveness—No Fellowship



BIBLE FOCUS

1 John 1:8-9; Genesis 3:4-8, 16-19; Numbers 14:18-23;
Ephesians 2:4-9; Matthew 6:9-15

KEY VERSE

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

– 1 John 1:9 NIV

BIBLE TRUTH

If we sincerely seek forgiveness from God for our sins, we can experience His salvation and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ.

LIFE QUESTION

How can I get closer to God this year?

THAT'S LIFE

"I don't want anything to do with that boy," complained Miss Pitt. "No matter how I try to talk to him, he just goes right back to doing the same thing. If the police come for him again, I will just let them take him." The mother felt she had reached her wits' end with her wayward son, Ricardo. Time and time again she had forgiven him and taken him back into the house. Shortly after, Ricardo would go right back to doing wrong and bringing shame on Miss Pitt.

Miss Pitt figured that he and she would be better off, if Ricardo went his way.

Sure enough, the police

came that weekend and arrested the son on suspicion of committing a crime. On Monday, the mother went to see her son at the courthouse and was surprised to find him very regretful and apologetic. He asked for Miss Pitt's forgiveness and made a solemn promise to stop his destructive behaviour.

His mother was hesitant in responding to Ricardo's plea for her forgiveness. She suddenly found herself blurting out:

"Ricardo, have you sought God's forgiveness for your sin?"

What advice would you give to 1) Miss Pitt 2) Ricardo?

What role does God's forgiveness play in your life?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

Many persons make New Year's resolution at the start of the year, to effect positive changes in their lifestyle. Are you one of those persons who has such a tradition? Have you thought about including a resolution to seek God's forgiveness, forgive others and forgive yourself?

In this unit, we will delve deeper into aspects of forgiveness relating to our relationship with God, others and ourselves.

1. We Need God's Forgiveness – Genesis 3:4-8, 16-19; Numbers 14:18-23

The couple, Adam and Eve, was initially walking in fellowship with God. Our God who delights in having a close relationship with us, had communion with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden during the afternoon (*cool of the day*) of each day (Genesis 3:8-9). Influenced by the serpent, Adam and Eve doubted God's word to them that they would surely die if they ate of the forbidden tree. Once they disobeyed God they experienced spiritual death — the death of the fellowship which they had with God — and condemnation to eternal punishment in the afterlife.

Resulting from the disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve, all human beings would experience spiritual death (Romans 6:23) and physical death (Genesis 3:19). Childbirth would be painful for women (v. 16) and all human beings would endure painful, hard labour in tilling the earth and pursuing other methods of daily survival (vv. 17,19). The reality of life is that once we sin, eternal separation is created between the Holy God and us, unless we sincerely seek His forgiveness.

In Numbers 14:17-23, Moses is pleading the case with God to let His then chosen people, the Israelites, live. He reasoned, that if God kills them for their disobedience to Him, then the nations who had heard that He was a great God would say that such a God could not even bring His people into the land He promised them. Moses appealed to God's longsuffering, merciful and forgiving qualities; not to say that He should overlook the sins, but to forgive His chosen people so that God's glory would be seen throughout all the Earth.

As a result of Moses' intercession for the Israelites, God did not kill them. Instead, as punishment for their sin, those who were born or lived in Egyptian slavery were not allowed to enter the promised land. Their descendants were afforded that privilege. Who is pleading on your behalf? Jesus is interceding with God on your behalf right now. Jesus wants you to seek His forgiveness.

2. We Need Fellowship with God – Ephesians 2:4-9; 1 John 1:8-9

Undoubtedly, God loves us and wants to fellowship with us. Throughout the history of humankind, many instances are recorded where humankind has failed, been disobedient and sinned against God. Also, there are innumerable demonstrations of the mercy, love and forgiveness shown by God to us. Ephesians 2:4-9 describes how we were deserving of punishment: *Like the rest we were deserving of wrath* (v. 3). Yet in verses 4 – 9 we are told that because of God's great love for us, He made provisions through Christ Jesus for our forgiveness. Jesus is the Way by which we have new spiritual life.

Our unwillingness to admit that we have sinned against God, will lead us astray. 1 John 1:8 states that acknowledgement of sin is the prerequisite to confession. After we have agreed that we have sinned, and considered the ways in which we have sinned, then, we can proceed to comply with the following teachings: *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). How has your life been impacted by your acceptance or rejection of Jesus' gift of forgiveness?

3. Always Forgive Others – Matthew 6:9-15

The passage begins with what we often describe as *The Lord's Prayer*. Teaching on the Mount of Olives, Jesus told His disciples how they and all of us should approach God in prayer. It is interesting to note that verses 12, 14 and 15 emphasise forgiveness. We are required to forgive all who may have done us wrong. This is an important action on our part. We should not hold unforgiveness towards anyone. Why? Because if we do, God will not forgive us: *"But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"*. (v.15). One cannot happen without the other. You must forgive, so that you will be forgiven.

How often have we caused God deep hurt when we have sinned against Him? Yet, He offers us grace, mercy and forgiveness, asking us to show forgiveness to each other, so He can forgive us in return.

Reality Check

Although the gift of forgiveness is free, we still must ask for it and accept it, in order to have it. If your hands are closed and someone wanted to give you something, you would have to open your hands to receive it. So it is with God's forgiveness. Open your heart to Jesus. Why is God's forgiveness important? It renews our fellowship with Him. If this is not done we alienate ourselves from God. Also, we cannot have peace of mind without God's forgiveness.

Forgive Yourself



BIBLE FOCUS

Jeremiah 31:3, 33-36; 1 Peter 5:4-10; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8;
Philippians 2:12-16

KEY VERSE

...“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

– Jeremiah 31:34c NIV

BIBLE TRUTH

It is sinful to harbour guilt over confessed sin of which God has forgiven us and to complain about circumstances that He has allowed in our life.

LIFE QUESTION

What are the things which have happened in my life for which I have not forgiven myself and for which I am angry with God?

THAT'S LIFE

Miss Masie received a marriage proposal from Mr Brown, a reputable member of the community, but she could not believe it. A deacon in his church, at which Miss Masie was recently baptised, he was also financially secure.

A mother of six children for different fathers who were not contributing to their upkeep, Ms. Masie had life very hard. The men in her district did not find her attractive, as they didn't want the responsibility of taking care of the children. Hence, her disbelief about Mr. Brown's proposal. Could he really be that genuine?

Ms. Masie had many sleepless nights over the proposal. Mr. Brown was very kind to her

and the children, who had formed a good relationship with him. She prayed earnestly about the situation. Having made numerous mistakes in her life, she was sure that she couldn't afford to make any more.

She was familiar with stories in the Bible about forgiveness, but couldn't see how any man could overlook her past errors. She decided to share her fears with Mr. Brown and hoped that he would not feel insulted or that his integrity was being questioned.

What would be your approach if you were asked to provide premarital counselling for the couple? How would you help Ms. Masie to understand the basis on which she should forgive herself?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

The sin of not forgiving yourself may be blocking your spiritual growth and preventing you from experiencing God's grace, joy and blessings. It may even be affecting your health and wellbeing.

In today's Lesson we learn that God requires that once we have asked sincerely for His forgiveness, we should stop doubting His ability to remove our sin. We should forgive ourself of committing wrong because God first forgave us.

1. Realise Self-unforgiveness is Sinful – Jeremiah 31:3, 33-36; 1 Peter 5:4-10

Speaking through His prophet, Jeremiah, God declared that from a long time ago and throughout the ages, He has loved His chosen people *“with an everlasting love”* and has drawn them to Him *“with unfailing kindness”* (31:3). We became God's chosen people when we accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour, through confession of sin and exercising our faith in Him. Jeremiah 31: 33-34 record the prophecy of the New Covenant which would be sealed with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, which saves us from sin and eternal punishment.

There are promises made in the passage that we should accept and believe: **1)** God will always be our God and we will be His treasured, chosen people (v. 33b). **2)** Unlike the Mosaic covenant, which included the Ten Commandments which were written on stone, under the New Covenant, the words guiding us and ways in which we need to honour God will instead, be written in the hearts and lives of God's chosen people. The Holy Spirit would impart God's ways in our life (v. 33a). **3)** God will forgive and forget our sin and wickedness, once we sincerely seek His forgiveness by faith. **4)** Everyone will have the opportunity of having a personal relationship with Jesus (v. 34a). Take assurance from the passage that the Lord will forgive our sins and remember them no more and therefore there is no place for your self-unforgiveness.

Self-unforgiveness denies the work that God has done for us on the cross and it denies that God's blood can cleanse every sin and stain. First Peter 5:4-9 invites us to cast all our care on Jesus. We fall prey to the devil who is seeking to devour us, when we do not believe God has forgiven us, after we have asked for His forgiveness (v. 9). God removes the burden of anxiety, guilt, shame and self-unforgiveness when we ask Him. You are a child of the King, forgiven and treasured by Him (Jeremiah 31:3,34; 1 Peter 5: 7; Luke 12:7; John 3:16). Accept God's grace; live the forgiven life!

2. Help; Do Not Condemn – 2 Corinthians 2:5-8

In second Corinthians 2:5-8, Apostle Paul lamented that there are persons in the Body of Christ whose unforgiving attitude may cause grief and harm to other Christians who have sinned. Such an attitude can cause the fallen Christian to believe that God has not forgiven him or her for the confessed sin. When Christians are unforgiving of other Christians and treat them with disdain, they are exhibiting a lack of understanding of the gospel and God's grace, from which they have benefited. Unforgiving Christians are full of pride and the Bible warns us about the consequences of such a disposition (Romans 11:21-22).

Those members of the church who have an attitude of condemnation towards persons who commit sexual sins and other sins which bring the church into disrepute, should take stock of themselves according to 1 Corinthians 2:5-8. Paul advised the Christians in Corinth that when their brethren commit sin, they are to correct them in love and reassure them that they are valued and have their support. In receiving the forgiveness and love of the church members, the errant Christian will realise that he or she has the forgiveness and love of God. After all; no sin is greater than any other and everyone has sinned and come short of God's glory.

3. Rely Completely on Christ – Philippians 2:12-16

Some members of the church at Philippi had become discontented and were constant complainers. This was beginning to affect their witness in the community. Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:12-16, addressed those issues. In particular, he warned that how Christians react to life's situations is a witness to non-Christians, so we must be careful of what we display to others in our attitudes and responses. We should not be negative witnesses for Christ, Paul cautioned. Keeping a positive, godly attitude, based on our knowledge of God and His faithfulness in keeping His promises to us is crucial in victory over feelings of inadequacy, unforgiveness and doubt in dealing with life's situations.

When we have a godly perspective on ourself, we will depend on God's strength, not ours, in everything we face in life—good or bad. When we have a godly perspective on ourself, we will ask God for the power that He gives (v. 13) *to fulfil His good purpose*, so that we can be exemplary witnesses for Him (v. 15). Persons who trust God and His power completely will believe God has forgiven them and they will forgive themselves over confessed sin.

Reality Check

Right now, tell God about any sin or wrong which you have already confessed to Him, for which you still feel that He has not forgiven you. Surrender the guilt and shame to Him. Repent! Believe He has answered your cry. Also, confess the wrong you did, to the person(s) you have hurt and make amends.

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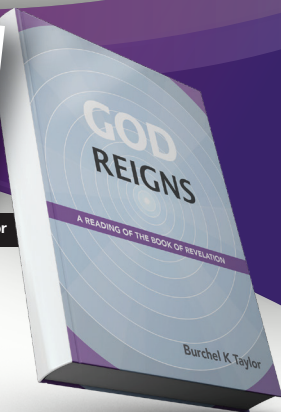
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